



DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION  
DOCKETS

02 JUN -6 PM 4:05

176066

Washington Office  
1440 New York Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 200  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202/942-2050  
FAX 202/783-4788

June 5, 2002

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Dockets Management Facility  
Room PL-401  
400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

**FHWA's Comments on Workzone Safety [FHWA Docket No. FHWA-2001-11130] - 25**

To Whom It May Concern:

AAA is pleased to submit comments in response to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on improvements which can be made in workzone safety.

As an association of over 45 million members dedicated to traffic safety and the motoring public, AAA recognizes the importance of workzone safety, not only for road crews but also for motorists traveling through these construction areas. With the increasing number of ongoing highway projects and those scheduled to begin in the future, safety problems at workzones are also increasing. While the traveling public can become frustrated by delays at these sites, temporary inconvenience will hopefully result in improved efficiency and safety on the nation's roads when construction is completed.

Transportation analysts report that the number of drivers is increasing faster than the overall population, and each driver on average is traveling more miles each year. With additional vehicles contributing to increased wear and tear on our roads, designated workzone areas are part of today's travel experience. Unfortunately, workzones have also been a hazardous area for construction workers, motorists and their passengers. In 2000, 1,093 people were killed in workzone crashes, according to the FHWA. This represents a 26% increase over the 868 deaths in 1999. Furthermore, more than half of these deaths were motorists or their passengers (FHWA uses the generic term "passenger occupants").

In July 2001, AAA, road construction, and safety organizations participated in a safety summit to develop solutions to workzone safety issues. Recommendations from the summit were later presented at a Congressional hearing. Recognizing the increase in workzone fatalities in the past two years, two important suggestions proposed by the summit participants included the following:

- Increase use of intelligent transportation systems that warn motorists of roadway dangers that lie ahead and suggest alternative routes.
- Increase communication with the public to encourage safe driving practices when traveling through workzones.

In 2000, AAA commented on FHWA's study of the use of uniformed police officers at workzone sites [Docket No. FHWA-1999-5387] and noted that uniformed police officers and plainly marked vehicles are highly effective in reminding motorists to drive safely. Officers and visible patrol cars are two ways to improve workzone safety. A third method is the use of multiple visible signs far enough ahead of the construction workzone to properly warn motorists.

AAA believes that maintaining consistent dedicated funding for transportation is essential. We strongly support efforts to ensure that adequate funding levels are met to maintain a safe and efficient highway system. However, our comments to this rulemaking will focus primarily on public outreach.

Effective communication with the traveling public is integral to improving workzone safety. FHWA can better communicate the safety message through continuing to work with industry and safety organizations. Joint educational efforts through the use of books, CDs, videos, PSA's (via radio, television, movie theaters, outdoor billboards), use of media through press releases and the Internet are a few ways the motorist can become better informed on workzone safety. In addition, a few of the current public communication devices, such as electronic highway message signs, highway advisory messages via radio, television, Internet sites and ramp metering, should be continued and/or increased in their amounts and usage. Also, public forums would be a useful way to both provide information and obtain motorist feedback.

As part of AAA's commitment to traffic safety, we have included tips for safer driving within workzones within the curriculum of our driving manuals and classes. Furthermore, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, a non-profit, charitable research and educational organization, has created materials, most notably, a video called "Getting Safely Past the Orange Barrels," and a manual dealing with headlight glare. Additionally, AAA clubs regularly issue press releases and safe driving tips to all media outlets.

AAA uses one of its premier travel publications to educate motorists on workzone safety through our Triptiks® by informing motorists of possible delays and detours. Providing alternate routes helps workzones by reducing the number of cars and trucks going through the construction areas, thus lowering the probability of crashes and deaths and by informing the traveling public of what to expect as they travel.

Highways must be maintained to reduce crashes and minimize their severity. Through this advanced notice, future rulemakings and next year's reauthorization of TEA-21, AAA will continue to balance motorists' desire for efficient travel with the ultimate goal of driving safely in every situation. AAA has numerous traffic safety programs to encourage responsible driving behavior, and we will continue to advise motorists to maintain safe driving standards when entering and exiting workzones.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important matter. Please feel free to call on AAA again in the future on this or other issues relating to highway safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathleen F. Marvaso". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kathleen" being more prominent and the last name "Marvaso" following in a similar style.

Kathleen F. Marvaso  
Managing Director, Government Relations